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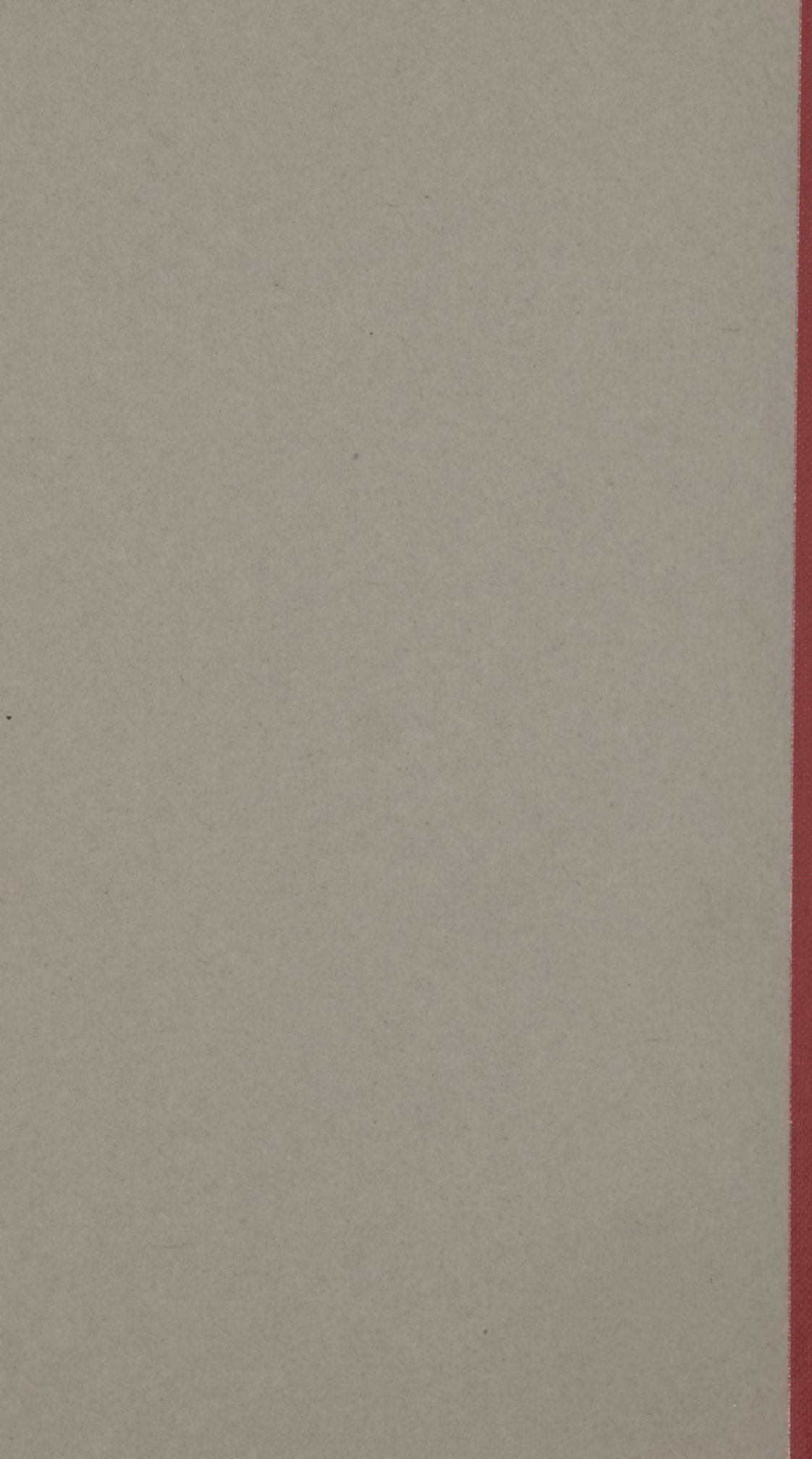
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ZYX AND HIS FAIRY:

OR

THE SOUL IN SEARCH OF PEACE.

Brown, Nathan



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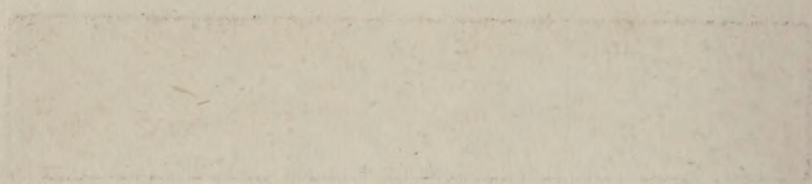
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My life is under ground;
I sometimes hear the sound
Of upper things, and catch a gust of air
From the sweet region where
Birds sing, and flowers bloom rare

From window cut aloft
Creeps silent in, and soft,
A gladsome ray, whereby
I know that one day I
Shall taste of light and its felicity.





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Eyx and his Fairy.

CHAPTER I.



YX was a good-for-nothing fellow. He one day teased his grand-mother with mad pranks, and then with saucy laughter escaped from her to the mountain den where he lived. And Eá had no means of punishing the naughty boy, for she was old, and could not chase the wild young sprite through the forests and over the fens. She could only call after him with her grieving but still musical voice, as she went sorrowfully on her journey alone to the Palace of Crystal, trying to console herself with thinking of the dear friends she should meet there. For Eá had traveled a long distance. She could

now just see the snow-capped mountains, from whose summit long, long years ago, as it seemed to her, she caught a glimpse of the shining roof of the Palace of Crystal, and hearing that her kinspeople lived there, set out to seek them. The first part of her journey was difficult. But then she was young, and was not afraid to leap down the steep mountain sides, from crag to crag; and could trip over the rough ways, singing as she went. As she grew older, her pace became slow, and her voice more quiet. Once she met a traveler who had seen the palace, and who told her of its emerald gates, its galleries of coral, and the flat crystal roof through which the sunshine fell soft and red into the chambers below. "Ah!" said Eá, sighing, "how tired I am! Surely I shall rest there."

"Yes," replied the stranger, "the cold mountain blasts cannot chill you there. There are rooms in the palace where I am told no storm can be heard." "That will suit me," said Eá, "I shall then be cured of my rheumatism. Only last winter I was so stiffened that I could scarcely move, and began to fear I should never reach the emerald palace."

Eá had a daughter who never smiled. This melancholy creature wore a gray gown, and a thick gray veil, which was

always dripping wet with her tears. Yet she never sobbed nor spoke, but glided about the valleys in the early morning like a ghost, and when the sun rose, crept away into a dreary cavern on the hillside. She had no visitors there, and led, you may believe, a forlorn life.

One morning, just as she was gathering her damp robes about her, and preparing to go home, she suddenly fainted away, and on recovering found herself sailing on a wide unknown ocean, full of beautiful islands. Bewildered with a delight she had never experienced before, and almost blinded with light, for she had lost her veil, she cried out, speaking for the first time in her life, "Where is my home? Who has brought me hither?"

A laughing voice replied, "It is I, it is Brightbeam! I have caught you at last. Long consultations have your mother and I had, as to the best method of enticing you away from your dreary haunts. I was almost discouraged, for you never would look at me. How I have wished you might be entangled and entrapped in the forest into which you would always glide at my approach. I have sometimes even kissed the hem of your gray mantle as it trailed after you, but no sooner had I done so than you vanished."

At this Niffel looked about for her mantle, but it was gone. Without waiting for her to speak, Brightbeam went on: "Yes, the dismal old gray thing is gone, and I hope you will never find it. I shall dress you now, my shining wife, in gorgeous gossamer, any color you wish, and we will sail on a long, long voyage together, away and away, for this ocean has no shore through many islands. Your name shall be no longer Niffel, but Shiningmist, and we will see fair castles and great white birds, and wonderful ships, that sail nowhere but here."

So she went with the gay prince, and Eá, her mother, was content with the marriage.

And when, long after, Brightbeam brought this elf, this sprite Zyx to her, saying, "We can do nothing with our son; do you train him;" she thought she discovered in her grandson a strange mixture of his mother's perverse melancholy, and his father's wild, laughter-loving freedom. "Truly, he is the child of the sunbeam and the fog," said she, "but I will see what can be made of him. But Zyx—how came he by that name?"

"When he was two months old," replied the prince, "his mother and I had a falling out. Leaving me, she found her dismal

gray gown again, and went habited like a nun to the Hall of the Fairies. They would not admit her, lest her dripping garments should put out the lights with which the brilliant apartment was illuminated; but taking the child (he was so little that five of them could lift him) they carried him in, and laid him before the queen. She was naming seven little faries in white dresses who had been brought to her for that purpose. In her hand was a box cut out of amethyst, from which she removed a golden lid, after having tapped upon it seven times with an ivory rod. Within were the magic letters brought by the elf Wincwer from the planet Uranus. Having distributed these among the fairy children by lot, she said to them, 'Go, my little maids, take the names given you by the magic letters. Use your power for good, and pity the suffering.'

"When the young fairies were removed by the attendants, three letters were found dropped upon the shining marble floor.

"'Good Queen,' said the kind old fairy Kruza, who stood watching my little boy as he lay asleep on the edge of the queen's foot-rug; 'here is a waif without a name; bestow them upon him.'

"The queen now for the first time saw the child, and looking again at the letters,

said, 'Strange! they are the last of the alphabet, the symbols of the unknown; he shall have them; and she named him ZYX. 'But,' she added with a sigh, 'grief accompanies these characters. He shall be of a restless and uncertain spirit.'

"Good Kruza then ordered the attendants to carry him to his mother. She herself went with them, to relate all that had happened, and sent the princess, your daughter, away with her blessing.

"After many months of wandering," continued Brightbeam, "Shiningmist returned to me. I think she has now wholly forgotten the gray gown. But on account of our constant journeyings, we find it impossible to bestow that attention upon our son's education which we deem necessary, and therefore I have brought him to you."

So the prince left Zyx with good old Eá. She found it quite as difficult to manage him as his parents had done, and I have already told you how he left her to go sadly on to the Palace of Crystal alone.

Meantime Zyx went in jolly mood to his den. "Welcome, master Zyx!" screamed the great bats that kept him company there. The den was cool from the fanning of their leathery wings, but Zyx was a sprite, and

could not feel the cold. It was damp also from the filtering of water through the mountain above. But Zyx inherited a liking for dampness from his mother. It was dark, but Zyx's bright eyes could see as well as the bats'. It was silent, but he whistled a merry tune, and felt quite free and contented.

"Hurrah! my little man;" said the Vampire, and his voice came from the farthest corner of the cave, "have you never heard of the wonderful pheasant Krinkra?"

Zyx peered into the remote darkness, and saw the vampire's mouth stretched into a hideous grin. But as this was the natural expression of the creature's countenance, he thought nothing strange of it. His two eyes glared like coals, his immense ears waved to and fro, and had not Zyx been a sprite he would no doubt have sucked his blood at that moment.

"The pheasant Krinkra," continued the creature, "has a golden crest, a golden and scarlet tail, a scarlet throat, and fans of gold and black upon his head. All day he scolds his mate and eats sapphires in the magical isle of Dundrum. Those who behold him are forever happy."

And Zyx went in search of the pheasant Krinkra. Of every one he met he inquired for the magical isle of Dundrum. Most

people shook their heads and passed silently on, not understanding the language he spoke, and too intent on their own pursuits to pay him much attention. At length a traveler, wrapped in a black mantle even to his head, listened, and seemed to comprehend, as Zyx repeated what the vampire said.

“Child,” he replied, “thou hast embarked on a perilous undertaking. Yonder,” and he pointed to a silver streak in the horizon just visible from the hill on which they stood, “is an ocean beset with storms, and full of whirlpools. In that ocean lies the island.” He turned to go, adding solemnly, in a low voice, “*Beware of the darkness of the den.*”

Zyx pondered over the singular injunction, but when he lifted his eyes the stranger was gone. He proceeded to descend the hill, and was encouraged to find, on reaching the foot, a level country comparatively easy to traverse. More and more distinct became the silver line as he proceeded, till at length he could see sails, and a broad, clear expanse.

“Surely,” he thought, “there are no whirlpools in that ocean, and it looks now as though it had never seen a storm.—And there—there!” he said aloud, looking towards a point of fainter blue in the


horizon, "I am sure that is the Isle Dunderum!"

He ran now, but soon tired himself, and was obliged to lie down to rest. Finding it near night, he decided to postpone the remainder of his journey till the next day.





CHAPTER II.

HE next morning, on arriving at the sandy beach, Zyx found a crowd of people collected, who upon inquiry proved to be travelers to Dundrum. They were being transferred in boats to a ship in the offing. Zyx being a shy boy, made no acquaintances, but slipped into one of the boats unnoticed, and in a few moments found himself alongside the ship. As he set foot on deck he heard a mysterious whisper, "*Beware of the darkness of the den.*" Zyx looked around, but the man who had lifted him had turned away, and he was left to his own conjectures. When all were taken on board, the anchor was raised, the sails spread, and the wind and tide being favorable, the ship made good headway.

The faint blue point grew to a line of

perpendicular cliffs, washed at their base with foam. Zyx watched it eagerly, and wondered where the harbor was.

But he dared not ask, for not a word was spoken on that ship after the raising of the anchor. The passengers all gazed in one direction, but no one addressed another. The captain gave his orders by signs, and the crew worked in silence. At night all retired below. Zyx stretched himself on a coil of rope, and no sound was heard but the dashing of the water.

With the earliest streak of dawn he sprang up, expecting to see the harbor of Dundrum, and ready to leap into the first boat that should leave the ship. What was his amazement, on looking toward the south, to see there the Isle Dundrum looking precisely as it did the night before; it was no nearer, no farther. The gray cliffs rose mockingly out of the waves; so near that the report of a cannon on them might have been heard, with the wind in the right direction; and the ship was sailing swiftly towards them, and had been, Zyx knew, all night long.

During the whole day he watched them, but they drew no nearer. The passengers looked at each other and at the captain; but did not speak, and all lay down at night as before.

Day after day was spent in the same manner, till Zyx grew stiff with the confinement, and thought it would be a relief to leap into the sea. Then he remembered the dreadful account given of these waters by the traveler on the hill, and shuddered. That night (it was the seventh since they set sail) after the passengers had retired, he crept up to the helmsman and determined to break the spell of silence. "Helmsman," said he, "how far is it to Dundrum?"

The man looked up and laughed; then moved his lips as if he would have spoken. Zyx saw that he was dumb. All that night the child sat at his feet, wide awake, and looked at the stars. He saw some new ones, and knew that they had traveled many hundred miles. All his thoughts he told to the helmsman, who answered him by signs and seemed pleased with his company.

Just at dawn the sky became overcast; the needle was violently agitated, and lightning was seen in various parts of the sky. The captain came on deck, the crew were awakened, and hasty signs were made to furl the sails. Terrific thunder was soon heard, and the sea began to boil strangely. At the same instant a gust of wind struck the one remaining sail, and the ship went over on her side. At this the passengers

became so alarmed that several leaped into the sea. Strange to say, they recovered their voices as they did so; but what they said could not be distinguished on account of the noise of the tempest. The occasional flashes of lightning revealed waterspouts in different stages of formation, and before the ship could be righted by cutting away the masts, it began slowly to describe a large circle around the Isle Dundrum. The sailors at once deserted their masts, and all the inmates of the vessel began to carry into execution one common impulse. Each had but one thought, one purpose—to save himself and his friends. The helmsman, seeing he could do nothing more at his post, went to Zyx, who was leaning over the bulwarks, and made signs to express that he would take him under his protection. Filling a water-proof bag with provisions, he bound it around his waist, and then leaped overboard, motioning Zyx to follow him. Both swam with main force against the dreadful current that was bearing the creaking ship on to its vortex; and succeeded in reaching the safer, though still fearfully agitated waters beyond it.

“Keep near me, my boy,” said the old man, panting, “some ship may pick us up, for this sea is much traveled.”

“Tell me, tell me,” said Zyx, almost

breathless with fright, "was that ship enchanted? What is that whirlpool, and whither does it tend?"

"To Dundrum," said his friend, "but to enter it in such a storm would be ruin. Our vessel will be dashed upon the rocks and shattered to atoms. In quiet weather the whirlpool revolves but slowly, and a good pilot may, by following its course, come safely into port."

"And the island—why has it receded from us for seven days?"

"It is under enchantment. A kraken rules it, and moves it where he will. I have often been months in reaching it, though it is but a day's sail from the wharf at which you embarked. When the kraken sleeps, the ships enter the magic circle, and if no storm occurs, reach the harbor in safety."

"Why are those that enter the ship dumb?"

"Because it is itself enchanted, being built of timber that grew on Dundrum. No vessels built of other material can enter the whirlpool. But see! the waves are less boisterous, and I perceive signs of sunrise in the east."

By the increasing light they saw a boat at some distance. Zyx shouted, and it approached them. "Those are are our pas-

sengers," exclaimed the helmsman, and then swimming towards them, besought them to take in himself and Zyx. The little craft was already crowded, and after receiving the old man settled nearly to the water's edge. He would have given up his place, exhausted as he was, saying a young life was worth more than an old one, but Zyx had swum away and would not return. He determined not to go far from the outer circle of the whirlpool, having conceived the idea of entering it, as soon as the storm should wholly abate, and floating to the harbor of Dundrum.





CHAPTER III.



HALF hour later the sun rose clear; the wind abated, and Zyx entered the current. The only exertion now required was to keep himself afloat. He lay upon the water as on a soft elastic cushion, his eyes almost at the level of the glassy surface, and gazed up at the now rosy and tranquil sky. The water was deliciously warm, and bore him on with an even and soothing motion. He found himself at last slowly nearing the island, whose coast he discovered to be a circle of abrupt cliffs, except at one point in the southeast, where a pass between the rocks disclosed a beautiful harbor within. To this point the current tended, and Zyx was carried safely through the strait into the harbor, which was quiet as a lake. A score of vessels of various shapes, and apparently from widely separated countries,

were anchored in it. Zyx swam to the wharf, where several men were standing, talking in a language unknown to him. He informed them by signs that he had been shipwrecked, and pronounced the name of the pheasant Krinkra with impatient gestures. No sooner had he done so, than he was seized by his dripping garments in a violent manner, his eyes blindfolded, and his hands and feet bound with cords. Immediately he felt a sensation as of being borne away to a great height, and then dropped. This produced a dizziness and faintness which rendered him unconscious. On reviving from the swoon he saw about him trees of a different species from any he had ever beheld. Their leaves were like gigantic blades of grass, and they bore large clusters of strange fruit.

Before he even had time to wonder that the bandage was removed from his eyes, and the cords from his hands and feet, and that his wet garments were replaced by thick silken ones of brilliant colors, a number of birds with green plumage and hooked beaks flew out of the trees and alighted before him, exclaiming in concert with very harsh but distinct voices, "Haste; search; here dwells Krinkra, king of birds."

Zyx sprang up, and would have made

further conversation with his strange informants, but they stared at him in such a very solemn way, that the words died on his lips. They continued staring until he was quite out of sight of them; for he often looked back, fearing they might follow.

Zyx found so many new and rare things in the garden of the pheasant, (for such he concluded the spot to be,) that he sometimes even forgot the object of his search. I have not time to describe the many wild creatures that fled from his too eager curiosity, or the birds of hues that Zyx had never seen except in the rainbow, or the lifelessly beautiful fishes whose whole existence was a dreamless delicious sleep.

Day after day was spent in happy discoveries, until he had seen all that was in the garden, and was weary of wonderful sights. "Where is the pheasant Krinkra?" he said aloud. "Let me see him, that I may be forever happy, and then I will return to the dear pine woods."

"Go, and return, but beware of the darkness of the den!"

These words were uttered behind him. Turning, he saw the figure of a man wrapped in a mantle even to his head. With his left hand he beckoned to Zyx, who followed in silence.

Arriving, after an hour's walk, at an open spot in the garden, they descended a flight of steps, and entered a cool grotto, which terminated in a subterranean passage, into which, seeing Zyx hesitate, the guide led him a little distance by the hand, and then leaving him without a word, retraced his steps, and closed a door behind him.

"Alas!" thought Zyx, "is this the end of my toilsome journey? No light before, a fastened door behind, and scarcely any air to breathe! Why did I follow that strange guide? Yet there was something in his voice that won my confidence. Turning back would be of no use; I will go on. It can, at worst, be no darker or closer than it is here."

Zyx did not know that the underground passage followed exactly the windings of the green garden path above; that all the steps he had taken, up there among the birds and flowers, he must now retrace in damp and darkness. The way seemed insufferably tedious, especially as he had serious doubts of its having any termination. "Who knows," said he, "but this may be a labyrinth, whose paths return upon themselves, and I may be forever imprisoned? It would be a just punishment for my unkindness and disobedience. Dear

grandmother!" (and here his voice was choked with sobs,) "I wish I had followed you, and thought of your happiness instead of my own!"

But it was not a labyrinth. The path, though winding, had an end, as Zyx discovered at last, to his delight, by a point of light in the distance, to which he ran with all the speed his weakened limbs would give him. Day and night had been the same to him for so many weeks that the sunlight almost blinded his eyes. As he gradually recovered the power to see, he became aware that the subterranean path had terminated in a court, floored with many-colored stones, and walled up on all sides with white marble. At the further end of the court were stairs, which he made haste to ascend.

The sight that greeted him at the top was painful in its brilliancy. A floor of solid glass, like an unruffled lake, invited his footsteps. He knew it to be solid, because precious stones of all kinds were scattered over it. This pavement, covering several acres, was walled in with white marble, like the court below. Nothing could be seen beyond it to the right or left. In front rose a palace of highly polished agate, with many windows, and a dome of silver.

Zyx's eyes ached with the sight. He longed for something to relieve the dazzling luster from which they could not escape. No cool green shadows from rustling trees fell here; every blade of grass was mercilessly shut down by the glittering pavement, which reflected and intensified the brightness around it. Zyx went on to the gate of the palace. Within he saw many human beings, old and young; a few engaged in mirthful conversation; others, and by far the greater number, wandering about with a questioning, unsatisfied expression of countenance. Still others sat alone, with despair written on their faces.

"What can this mean?" thought Zyx. "Are not those who see the pheasant Krinkra forever happy?"

No one opposed his entrance; indeed no one seemed to notice him. After passing through many rooms, and ascending a spiral stairway, guided by the harsh chattering of a bird, he reached the dome, where, on a perch of ebony inlaid with gold, sat the pheasant Krinkra and his mate pecking at each other. The floor was strewn with black and scarlet feathers, and the air was filled with yellow down. They only ceased their strife, and Krinkra his chattering, to leap down and snap at the sapphires in a bowl that stood beneath them.

Zyx watched them wearily a long time, then turned and left the room. On the stair he met the mysterious traveler, wrapped, as before, in a dark mantle, who passed on without speaking.

After wandering about the palace for a long time, too dejected to attempt to make any acquaintances, Zyx lay down on the hard floor and went to sleep. The next day he strolled about in the same way, and the next, and the next; going to the dome occasionally, where he invariably witnessed the same distressing scene. He spent a week in this manner, growing every day more weary and dissatisfied. Once, meeting a young girl weeping, he begged to know if he could in any way relieve her distress.

"Alas!" said she, "if possible, tell me how I may escape from this prison! Ten days have I been here, with no food but turquoises, and I am hungry—hungry—hungry!" A fearful yellow pallor came over her emaciated features as she emphasized the last words, and lifting her scarf, showed where she had nourished herself by sucking the blood from her arm.

Perceiving that she was too faint to speak further, Zyx bade her sit on the stair till he should seek the traveler who had twice so mysteriously guided him. He

hardly knew where to go, and indeed had little hope that his friend was still in the palace. After searching every room in vain, and finding no one that could give him the desired information, he was about returning to the young woman, when he heard voices above, and saw her descending, supported by the very person of whom he was in search.

“Go with us ;” he said to Zyx, with his usual air of authority. They passed through the corridors in silence, crossed the glass pavement, and reaching the marble wall at the right, paused a moment, while the guide removed a slab near the ground, thus disclosing a means of exit. Too overjoyed to speak, the young girl passed through, followed by Zyx and the guide, who then replaced the slab.

Zyx was surprised to find himself in precisely the spot where the nine green parrots had said to him, “Haste ; search ; here dwells Krinkra, king of birds.” Climbing one of the trees, he threw down some of the delicious fruit, with which the poor girl’s hunger and thirst were soon appeased.

“Kind friends,” she said, “I ask of you one more favor. Help me to leave forever this dreary island.”

Well acquainted as their guide was with the island, Zyx and his companion had no

difficulty in reaching the wharf. He only left them when they were safely embarked, repeating these words as he lifted Zyx into the ship: "*Beware of the darkness of the den!*"

During the voyage, Zyx would gladly have learned something of the history of the young girl so happily rescued from starvation, but the inexorable spell again bound every tongue but his own.

The trip was accomplished in twenty-four hours, without storm or disaster. At the landing, a careworn, middle-aged man came up to the young woman, and looking for a moment intently into her face, burst into tears.

"My father!" she exclaimed, and was borne away in a swoon. Zyx, finding his services no longer required, retraced his steps across the plain, and reascended the hill.

His journey home was a melancholy one. Disappointed and restless, he had nothing to do but to revolve in his mind the extraordinary events of his expedition to Dundrum. Nothing urged him forward now, and he went on towards home, only for want of something more exciting to do.



CHAPTER IV.



IN his return Zyx wandered in the woods for days in a disconsolate mood. His home was not attractive. The noisome vapors nauseated him, and he hated the vampires for the lies they had told.

"I wish," he said one morning half aloud, as he watched a mountain cascade leaping over a cliff, "that I had gone with my grandmother to the Palace of Crystal. She at least, would have sung me pleasant songs, but here no one cares for me."

"Dear child, I care for you," said a mournful voice by his side, and looking up he saw his mother in her gray cloak, with a gaily colored scarf about her throat. "Listen to me. The good sprite Kruza whispered a secret in my ear when she restored you to me from the palace of the fairy

queen. 'As our queen was naming your son,' said she 'I saw a moving picture in the marble platform under her feet. The little Zyx, with the seven fairies just named appeared in a dance; and one, the most beautiful, the youngest, smiled graciously on him, took him by the hand, and they wandered into the forest together. Be sure,' Kruza added, 'that this betokens good to the child; whether sooner or later, I cannot tell.' But I have only this short moment to stay," continued Shiningmist; "already your father misses me." The gray cloak dropped off, and Zyx saw the robe of rainbow colors underneath, just as his mother vanished behind the waterfall.

"Ah," sighed Zyx, "if I might only find that kind fairy, and live in the forest with her! I will search for her. The creatures of the wood, perhaps, will tell me how to find her."

So he commenced his search. Now Zyx thought no one cared for him, but it so happened that all the trees of the forest and their inhabitants knew him well, and talked the same language. They would have loved him, had it not been for the mildew of the den that clung to his clothes, and matted his hair.

Zyx first met a raven going to a grand

council of his tribe which was to be held in a neighboring grove.

“O Raven, Raven!” said he eagerly, “tell me where my fairy lives, and how I shall know her.”

The raven looked very wise and answered, “I cannot tell where she lives, but you shall know her by the color of her hair. It is darker than the shadow of the pines at twilight.”

In the pond a swan rowed about with its oar-like feet, and scooped up worms from the mud.

“O Swan! tell me where my fairy lives, and how I shall know her.”

The swan washed her bill and answered, “I cannot tell where she lives, but you shall know her by her throat. It is white as the deepest clouds in the lake, and her skin is soft and downy.”

On a beech tree sat a jay, and Zyx said, “O Jay! tell me where my fairy lives, and how I shall know her.”

“I cannot tell where she lives, but you shall know her by her dress. It is blue as the sky between clouds, when your back is towards the sun.”

“I can tell where she lives;” squeaked a nut-brown squirrel, playing a tattoo on a fallen log with his paws, and holding upright his quivering feathery tail. “She

loves the chestnut trees, because there she plays at ball with me. But at romps I always beat. Her hands and feet are too soft for running and climbing."

"Vain fellow!" said the chestnut tree, shaking all its hanging green blossoms, "Do you not know that it is the shadows of my rare-notched leaves she loves?"

"What is that?" said the silver fir. "Do you not know that she sits under your shade that she may the better see my purple cones? I have often heard her say they are the color of a dove's throat."

"Shame on you!" said all the mosses of the log in concert; but they could not all together make sound enough for the fir and the chestnut to hear. The squirrel did, however, and so did Zyx.

"Shame on you; to pretend that you are the objects of her love, when you must know that she has sharp eyes to see our finer beauty, and a keen brain to understand our more delicate organization."

"Well, well," said the ferns that grew close by, beside the waterfall, "if this isn't cool, when every body knows perfectly well that she comes to get the effect of our graceful curves and tender greenness in the morning sunshine."

"You would have fine curves and color without me," laughed the brook. "Look

at those wizzled gray cousins of yours, up yonder on the rock. Does she visit them?" Then in a softer tone; "I won't talk about *her* to you, selfish creatures; only it may do you good to know that I left the stillness of the mountain top that I might cool the air around her, and shall always flow for her sake. She may love me or not, only let her drink of me, and wet her hair in my spray, and I am contented."

Meantime the raven had proceeded to his synod, and the swan to her breakfast. The jay went to tell the news to his mate, and the squirrel found a hickory nut under his log; the chestnut tree concluded it was too much trouble to continue the discussion, and the silver fir became absorbed in its own reflections (in the pond); the sun was now too warm for further exertion on the part of the mosses and ferns, and Zyx, finding all silent, returned to his den.





CHAPTER V.



FOR days Zyx searched the wood in vain, until he suspected all living things of deceit, and determined to confine himself to his den. "I wish I could get rid of these bats," he said to himself. But they had inhabited the cave as long as he, and had no idea of being ousted.

One night Zyx's sleep was often disturbed by noises overhead, as of a pickaxe and hammer. Not sufficiently awakened to trouble himself to ascertain the cause, he continued in a restless slumber until morning, when a flash of light and the falling of a heavy stone from the roof of the cave brought him to his senses. The light was not merely a flash, it was a steady stream, falling through a shaft which extended to the top of the mountain, and illuminated the remotest corner of the cave. Directly under the shaft stood the mysterious guide,

his face hidden as before; only one wondrous shining lock of gold escaped from the mantle, which was brushed backwards by the fresh breeze that now blew through the cave. Too bewildered to speak, Zyx sank down again on the wet ground, and covered his eyes with his hand to shield them from the light.

The stranger stood silently before him, and after a few moments stooped down, and gently, but very decidedly, unclasped the lad's fingers, and bade him look around him.

Zyx shuddered as he did so. A green pool, filled with hideous creatures, lay almost at his feet; the ground about and under him was mud; on the fissured rocky sides of the cavern were collected drops of unwholesome moisture, in which a pale, lifeless moss grew; huge spiders had festooned the roof with their webs, and though the bats had fled from the sunlight, their great clammy wings could be distinctly seen in the corners.

"Alas!" said Zyx, "is this then my home? Why have I not made it better worth your presence, kind guide? I have wasted my time in a fruitless journey, and now it is too late; this hole can never be made habitable;" and he burst into tears and shrank into a dark corner. The stran-

ger made no reply, and when Zyx dried his tears and looked up, a few minutes after, he was gone.

Zyx found a pickaxe, drill and hammer, half imbedded in the mud under the shaft, and tried, by pounding on the stones, to frighten away the bats, but with no effect. They only clung the tighter to the rock, with their long lean fingers. He tried to scrape off the moss from the wet walls with his hands, but to no purpose. "Perhaps," thought he, "the fresh breeze and the sunshine will dry up this mud in time;" and he lay down to sleep, dejected, but not wholly discouraged.

The next morning, on waking, he saw his unknown guest standing under the shaft as before. "My son," said he, "this cave is not a fit home for thee. Take this drill and hammer, and dig thee another."

Zyx looked hesitatingly at the granite wall which bounded the den on all sides, and was filled with dismay; but a strange pang shot through his heart, as the stranger repeated sorrowfully, "*Dig thee another*;" and taking the implements, he went to the farther end of the cavern, and attacked the wall with such such vigorous blows that the bats looked at each other and wondered.

He made no impression; not even a chip

was cracked from the foundations of the mountain, but he beat on vigorously. "Since he bids me, I will do it," thought he, "whether the labor avail anything or not." Presently he turned, finding his arm arrested by a strong hand laid upon it. The touch was light, the clasp was a caress; and at that instant Zyx felt a new life coursing through all his veins.

Raising his other arm he wielded the hammer as before, but now the fissure in which he had planted the pick began to widen, and flakes of rock to fall off under his blows. Hour after hour he toiled thus, with his guide's hand grasping the arm in which he held the drill, and found, at the end of a day's toil, that a considerable excavation had been made.

When the task was done, his guide left him, coming back the next morning to assist him as before. Every day he returned, and left him when the allotted task for the day was over. Sometimes Zyx grew weary of the monotonous work, but the closer grasp of his now familiar, though still unseen friend always restored his energy.

Once the guide said, as Zyx stopped to wipe the sweat from his forehead, "My child, be not discouraged if thou find thy task a long one. It is not to be accom-

plished in a day, nor in a month. Years must elapse ere it be completed. Thou wilt need all the resolution thou canst command. An indomitable will and a far-seeing patience must be thine."

Once Zyx dug at a certain spot a month without visible effect. "Kind friend," he said, "let me go to a softer place. This huge mass will never yield to my puny blows, and if it should, it would in falling overwhelm me."

"*Do thy duty, my son,*" replied the guide sternly; yet tears dropped from beneath the mantle upon the obdurate rock, and Zyx felt that his clasp was tighter.

Another month he worked at the same spot. Often his arms would become quite stiff, before the day's task was accomplished, but the guide never relented. He sometimes held the lad for a moment in a close embrace, stroking his hair, and calling him by various tender names, which made Zyx wonder, and woke a strange tumult in his heart. But it was only for a moment; he would then release him, and bid him resume his work.

At length the mass of granite began, not to be loosened, but to sink in a mysterious manner; only a hairbreadth a day, yet so steadily that Zyx took heart, and hammered away with redoubled rapidity.

It was a full year before it had so far descended that Zyx could see over the top of it into a large grotto beyond, hung with luminous crystals and floored with stalagmites.

It was a joyful day when he leaped over the hateful barrier, and found himself in this beautiful cave. "Dear guide!" he exclaimed, "dwell here with me. Let us forget past toil, and the filth and darkness of the den."

The guide smiled, and said nothing. The next morning when Zyx woke, he saw that a second shaft had been sunk from the top of the mountain, and the sunlight let in. Looking up through it, he saw the blue sky, and heard a sweet distant noise as of birds. A rare perfume came down through it, which he stood a long time to inhale. On coming back to his grotto, he found the stalactites no longer luminous, and though it was in other respects as before, the new home had lost its charm. The air, though infinitely better than that of the den, was still somewhat close, and Zyx went back to the shaft and looked up.

"O that I might go up, and live on the top of the mountain! Those that live there might let down a rope, and my guide, who must have dug the shaft, might draw me up."

"*Here are thy tools,*" said a mild but firm voice beside him, and turning he saw his friend, who placed the drill and hammer in the hands of the astonished Zyx, and led the way to the remote end of the grotto, where another granite wall obstructed the way.

"The path to the mountain top lies through this rock;" the same voice added, after Zyx had begun his work.





CHAPTER VI.



OTWITHSTANDING his toil, Zyx went now every day to the forest, and talked with the creatures there. He never told them of his den, or who visited him, but conversed with them of other matters, of the great green earth, the seas, the blue air, and the clouds. They told him many things that he never knew before, and became more and more kind to him as they noticed his hair become dry and lustrous, and his garments clean and fresh. He almost ceased to think of his fairy, and never inquired for her now; but seemed happy, if not yet fully contented.

One morning the squirrel said, in his fine, piping voice, "Look, Zyx! there are three children who will play with you. I know them well; their names are Faeger,

Faegen, and Frith. They come often to the wood to see me"—and off he darted, and was in the top of the oak, under which the children were playing, in a trice. They laughed to see him, and clapped their hands, then pelted him with acorns; but he only shook his tail saucily, and flashed from limb to limb, at a rate quite dazzling to Zyx's eyes, who tried to follow his motions. Presently he began to pelt them in return, and Zyx ran to their aid. At length the four, tired and out of breath, gave up the game, and the squirrel dropped down on Frith's shoulder, and put his head under her chin. Then she stroked his striped back, and he looked impudently up at Zyx, as much as to say, "Don't you wish you were I?"

But Zyx was busy picking up Faeger's berries and replacing them in the basket, which had been upset; and she, with her plump white fingers, was trying to help him. But her brown curls constantly fell into her eyes, and she made poor work of it. Zyx told her she would stain her white dress, whereupon she sat down, and fanned herself with an oak leaf.

"Little boy," said Faegen, who had but just noticed Zyx, "where did you come from? Does your mother live in the wood?"

"My mother lives in the sky," said Zyx. "and wears a jeweled dress."

"Poor fellow!" whispered Faeger to Frith. "I wonder how long ago she died."

"No;" said Zyx, who heard, "she cannot die; she is immortal. Her name is Shiningmist."

"How strange!" thought Faegen. Frith still stroked the squirrel, who did not understand human speech, as Zyx did.

"*My mother*," said Faeger, "lives in the castle on the hill. I live there too, with my cousin Faegen, whose father and mother died many years ago. We have a cross old nurse, who is sick now, and we can run away and play in the wood with our Frith."

Zyx glanced at Frith's blue dress of wool, and thought he never saw one so soft and beautiful. He wanted to ask where she lived too, but dared not, and only said, "What games do you play, Faeger?"

"Oh," replied Faegen, answering instead of her cousin, "when we are tired of this saucy rogue," (and she reached her arm around Frith's neck, and pulled the squirrel's tail,) "we go and feed our rabbits and our birds. We have a great many families to take care of. Then there is a pond where we row in a little boat, and

sometimes we pick berries and gather nuts, and sometimes we keep house in our little castle."

Zyx wondered where and what their little castle was, and they took him to it by a well worn footpath through the brakes. Faegen led the way, and Zyx followed the others, with the basket of berries. The squirrel, jealous of the attention Zyx was receiving, had gone home sulkily to his log.

The "castle" was near a now unused quarry of brown stone. "These two large blocks," said Faegen, "were cut a hundred years ago, when my uncle's castle was built, but not being required, were left here, and are now covered, as you see, with beautiful white and brown lichens. Faeger and I laid these birch sticks across for a roof, and bark above them to keep out the rain."

"Frith told us how to make that arch of tamarack branches, and inside, oh, inside," said Faeger, her blue eyes sparkling with pleasure, "such carpets! But come in and see." Zyx followed her. The little house was just high enough for the children to stand in. "This moss Frith brought us; she never would tell where she found it, and when it is withered she brings fresh."

Zyx thought the floor too dainty to step

on, with its green elastic carpet, variegated with rosettes of brown lichens, some with shaded rings, and a wonderful silken velvet bloom on the lower surface, some white and stiff like paper, some of mixed gray and lavender, with delicate branches, like trees stripped of their leaves and bark.

"This," said Faegen, pointing to the long green plumes of thread-like lichen that festooned the roof, "Frith calls mermaid's hair; she gets it from pine trees."

Heaps of dried moss served the children for seats and a table. Over the latter Faegen spread a napkin, and going to a large basket that stood in the corner, took out some dainty tarts and cake, and laid upon it. These, with Faeger's berries, served for their lunch, and Frith brought in water from a cold spring near by, in a silver cup which hung at her belt.





CHAPTER VII.



HE picnic and the merry talk of his new friends were a rare treat to Zyx. He soon felt as much at home with the light-hearted little maids as if they had been his sisters; except with Frith, of whom he was afraid. Not that there was anything terrifying in the child's appearance; certainly her black curls and eyebrows were no more appalling than Faeger's brown ones, or Faegen's braided flaxen hair. Faeger's hair curled tightly; her cousin sometimes pulled a lock out to its full length, to see it fly back like an untwisted spring. But Frith's swept down in larger curves. "I like yours better," said the amiable Faeger to her; "nurse would say it shows a candid temper of mind. She scolds at mine, and says I am dreadfully stubborn, all owing, no doubt, to my hair."

Faegen had now folded the napkin, and stood waiting.

“Come, Faeger, let us go. Poor Dortha will get another scolding from nurse, who will be sure to wake and inquire for us.”

The little party left their castle, closed up the entrance with hemlock branches, and retraced their steps by the foot-path. At its termination Faeger and Faegen said good-bye to Zyx and Frith, after many affectionate entreaties to the latter to accompany them. She only shook her head sadly, kissed them both, and turned into the denser forest, apparently forgetting Zyx, who stood under the oak looking after her.

“Where can she be going? Surely some harm will overtake her in that unfrequented wood,” he thought. But he dared not follow. There was that in her mien that had kept him at a distance. Though her manner was most courteous, and unaffectedly kind, one might not presume to question, or hope fully to know her.

Once, for he was often one of the company at the little castle afterwards, when Frith was absent, he said to Faegen, “Do you know where Frith’s home is?”

“She lives down in the glen; at least, so everybody says that I have asked. You know the way the brook goes to the river?”

There are pleasant meadows there, and groves of beech."

"I know they say she lives there," added Faeger, "but there is something about Frith that makes me think strange things of her. Did I tell you, Faegen, what I dreamed the other night? I thought I saw her with the fairies; she seemed quite at home among them, and they talked and played and danced with her, just as though she had been one of themselves. I asked nurse afterwards, if fairies ever were of the size of human children, and she said No, and then, after thinking a minute, she remembered her grandmother telling her a story when she was a little girl, of a baby into whom a fairy's spirit had entered. He grew up to be a man, and never would fight, but spent his life in curing sick people and other good works."

"You are a fanciful girl, Faeger," said her cousin, who seemed the older, and had a way of assuming superior wisdom, though the children were born on the same day. "I don't see anything mysterious in Frith, for my part, and should be quite wretched if I were to invent such uncanny stories about her. I should be thinking of them all the time she is with us."

"I do think of them all the time, and they are very pleasant to think about, and

not in the least uncanny. Sweet Frith, I wish she would come and live with us."

"So do I, and then you would be convinced that she is a solid lump of real flesh and blood, as nobody shall make me believe she is not. I am glad the dear child can't know how you slander her."

"Well, dear Faegen, don't let us quarrel now; we haven't, you know, all these ten years we have lived together."

"Only once," said Faegen laughing, "when I tried to make you believe that nurse told your mother a falsehood, and that you were the orphan and I the daughter of the house."

"Be still," said Faeger, "what's the difference? We are of the same blood. Were not our mothers twin sisters, and our fathers twin brothers? And," she added more gently, "we have the same father and mother now."

The next day Zyx did not join his little friends, but went, after his task was done, to the waterfall, and sat there thinking of his mother, and wishing he might see her again.

He knew not how long he had been sitting there, when Frith's blue dress appeared, fluttering through the sweet fern, and over the clumps of juniper. He thought of what the jay said, and repeated to him-

self, "It is just like the sky between clouds when one's back is towards the sun." Then he remembered the swan, and said, "And her throat is white as clouds in the sky, and her hair is black as the shadow of pines at twilight. Oh, my fairy!" He sprang towards her; a longing seized him to touch her dress at least, and hold her fast; when he suddenly remembered that his hands were daubed with mud and mould from his morning's work.

Frith had not seen him, for the chestnut tree was between them. Her little feet pattered rapidly on, and she was soon out of sight again.

Zyx burst into tears, then checking himself said, "My guide forbids me to waste my strength by weeping; I shall need it to-morrow."





CHAPTER VIII.



TILL Zyx went on with his excavation. At intervals, as he penetrated into the heart of the mountain, shafts were let down to give him light and air; but otherwise one day's work was very much like another. What all this mining would amount to in the end, he knew not, but he put implicit confidence in his guide, and learned thoroughly the lesson of obedience. "Child," this faithful friend said to him one day, "thy wayward temper has driven thee from thy parents, but I will lead thee. Be my son." And Zyx learned that duty was the true goal of all effort, the sufficient end and reward of toil.

Some of these things he told Frith one day, as they walked in the wood together, and she thereupon took his hand, stained

and rough as it was, and they went on a long way, hand in hand, he forgetting meantime how much fairer she was than he, and daring to talk familiarly to her, as to an equal.

Many long summer afternoons they played together happy and quiet games, for they were young children yet. Faegen and Faeger no longer came into the forest to play, for the nurse had recovered, and kept them at their embroidery. Zyx did not miss them, kind friends though they were, but he and Frith often talked about them, and Zyx sometimes wove baskets of bark, filled them with berries, and carried them to the castle for the little girls.

“I wish,” she said one day to Frith after one of these errands, “that I owned a castle like that.”

“What would you do with it?” asked Frith.

“I would first enlarge the windows and let in more light ; then I would adorn it with pictures and vases, and all manner of rare plants. I would search over the world for curious and dainty toys. In one room should be selected all the wise and entertaining books that have been written from the beginning of the world, and in the hall should be many instruments of music and musicians of genius to play on them.

Frith patted his glowing cheeks and said, "You would need to be a prince, little Zyx, to do all those fine things."

"That I would be, and a fairy princess should be the lady of the castle. Her hands and feet should be dainty, small, and she herself as delicate as a lily. She should be wiser than I, but simple in her speech and ways as a little child; not like Faeger, who is sweet-tempered, but has few thoughts beyond her home; quiet in all her motions, not like Faegen, who bustles about too much for the high-born maiden that she is."

Frith had not heard a word of this inventory of perfections. Her ear had caught the word "fairy," and she had been looking fixedly at him ever since, in a kind of bewilderment, and when he ended by saying, "My fairy's name must be Peace," she exclaimed in a startled whisper, "How did you learn my secret?"

"Oh, I have friends who know you well, Frith," he replied, secretly delighted to have her at such an advantage, and a little vexed that she should have forgotten so soon all about his castle, and should not even condescend to be interested in his compliments. But when he saw the sudden paling of her cheeks and lips at the word "friends," he related the whole story

of the hall of the fairies, and his admission to it, and all that Kruza had told his mother, and finally his search for her.

She interrupted him often with questions. When he came to the naming of the fairies with the magic letters, Frith said sadly:

"I never could conceive why my name should be Peace; I am never at rest; I question all things, myself, all living beings, the earth, and alas, even things unseen. I mistrust them, I find something inexplicable in them all. Why did the fates, unless in mockery, give me that name?"

"I know," said Zyx. You question, but I am quiet. You are the perpetual answer to my doubts. You are *my* Frith."

The fairy turned suddenly away, and Zyx saw no more of her that day. He returned to his home more than ever determined to push on his mining vigorously.

The next time he saw the fairy she was cheerful, as usual, and they played with Faegen's wild rabbits, who told them all their family history, and the difficulty they had in obtaining a living now that their kind patroness had deserted them.

Frith in return told them all she knew of Faeger and Faegen, and recommended to the father and mother to move to a more favorable location.

"We chose this," replied the father, "be-

cause we are here safe from sportsmen, and would rather suffer a little from lack of grass and clover, than to be in continual terror."

Frith took up the little ones carefully and fed them with some tender leaves. As she did so, Zyx noticed a gash upon her wrist, and several traces of blood on her hands.

"What can have happened to Frith?" he asked himself, but dared not put the question to her.





CHAPTER IX.



NE night Zyx, unable to sleep, left the cave, and crossing the forest, came to the brook, and followed it towards the valley. Its sound had attracted him, for it seemed more softly musical than ever before, and a noise as of tiny oars plashing in the water, mingled with its murmur. He threaded his way through the alders, guided partly by its voice, and partly by the occasional glimmer of its ripples in the moonlight. There was a strange sound in the leaves over his head, too. It was like the tinkling of bells far off; so very soft that he could only hear it when he stopped. He looked up, but could see nothing, and went on very much puzzled, till he came to an open spot, where soft green grass grew quite to the margin of the brook, which was here quiet

as a lake. He was just emerging from the thicket, and about to step on the turf, when he found himself arrested, he knew not by what. The atmosphere all at once became impenetrable to him. It was as if he had attempted to walk through a mirror. A murmur as of the buzzing of bees came from the grass, and looking down he saw, in spots where the ground was bare, multitudes of little carriages made of shells inlaid with rubies. The bees that were harnessed to these tiny barouches kept up a restless pawing on the pavement of pearls, and threatened to break the reins of spiders-web by means of which the drivers held them. Over each barouche was suspended a gilded canopy to which minute silver bells were attached, and Zyx now understood the rustling noises in the wood.

“So I have come upon a fairy festival! No wonder the leaves kept up a marvelous trembling and shaking over my head with these equipages rattling over them. I’d like to see the road they came by, and the pontoons they threw from leaf to leaf!”

The light of the moon was intensified by lenses and reflectors, which, elevated on quills at suitable intervals, threw so brilliant a light on the central square that Zyx could distinctly see all that transpired there. The avenues leading to it became more and

more thronged with carriages, from which at length a procession of fairy people issued; the ladies, dressed in azalea petals, with diamond necklaces, and girdles of braided gold; the fairy cavaliers in suits of laurel leaf, each with a rose-prickle dagger dangling at his belt. All wended their way to the tent in the center of the square, which was spacious enough, Zyx judged, to accommodate ten thousand guests. The still surface of the brook presented an equally animated scene. Fairy barges were ferrying across the stream those who lived on the other side, while other pleasure boats in great numbers were nearing the wharf both from above and below. Zyx was absorbed in watching them, when he heard his name whispered in his ear, and turning suddenly, saw the fairy Kruza standing on a beech leaf. He knew it must be she, for who else knew his name? and besides, it was a grave, quiet-looking fairy, with the most benevolent face, so sweet in expression that the very wrinkles showing her age seemed to add to her beauty.

“Zyx!” she repeated, “this ground is enchanted. You cannot enter, you cannot join this festival. Neither can you remain here longer, for the ceremonies of the night are of so mysterious and secret a character

that it is death for any but a fairy to witness them. But follow me; you shall wait in the glen until dawn, and I will then come and talk with you."

Kruza, stepping from leaf to leaf, led him by a circuitous way farther down the stream, where it passed through a lonely defile. "Wait in this grove of oaks," she said, "till I return," and left him. Lulled by the sound of the water, Zyx fell asleep, and lay quite motionless till nearly dawn, when Kruza's fine shrill voice in his ear waked him. He followed her again in silence. When they had reached the summit of a grassy knoll, Kruza pointed to a moonlit spot below, and whispered, "Look!"

Separate from the forest stood a lightning-struck pine, stripped of foliage, but wrapped in moss and festooned with lichens. Only two branches remained, stretching out from the trunk like outspread arms. The tree cast a gigantic shadow upon the grass, and within this gloom Zyx presently discerned the figure of a child. It was motionless; its arms were extended toward the withered trunk, and its outspread hands were buried in the wet grass. While Zyx looked, the moonlight touched the face, and he saw that it was Frith! He could not mistake, though

the eyes were shut, and the flushed cheek was half-hidden by damp and tangled hair.

"Alas!" said Zyx, "where is her home? Let me lead her to it. She has lost her way, and will breathe in unwholesome vapors from the forest."

"No," replied Kruza, sternly. "Do you not see how strong and well she looks, and what happy dreams flush her face? There is medicine in the fragrance of the tree. As to homes, she has many, and can find her way to her friends without help. But an evil Genie has for many years threatened her life, and I have no doubt has been pursuing her to-night, for see! there is a fresh gash on her wrist, and her dress is torn in many places. He has often caught and fettered her, and it is only in the circle of the shadow you see, that her life is safe. Within it the Genie has not power to step, and she sleeps there securely."

Just then the little Frith stirred, woke, and raised her arm into the moonlight. It was indeed sadly gashed and streaked with blood. She went to the brook, and kneeling, played with the swift-running water, which cured the wounded wrist with its soft kisses.

Zyx ran down the knoll and across the meadow with all speed, and was at the brookside before Kruza had time to speak.

But when he reached the spot, behold no Frith was there! Where the brook had been was a dense forest; the meadow had become a swamp, and Kruza stood before him in human shape.

"Foolish boy! Do you not know that I can change the form of all substances by enchantment? It is of little use to attempt to elude my power. Vain sprite, did you imagine that you could relieve Frith?"

"No, Kruza," replied Zyx, with angry tears in his eyes, "I imagined nothing. But since you are mistress of enchantment, why not relieve her yourself? Enchant away forever that cruel goblin. Enchant her into a palace, as you have me into a dark forest."

"Ah Zyx," she said, more gently, "I will show you a secret." And she led him on through the densest part of the wood, over brooks, through ravines, and finally, to the foot of a granite ledge where, pushing aside the interwoven branches, she pointed to a dark opening in the rock, and motioned him to enter.

Zyx began now to fear that Kruza herself was an evil spirit, and would have left her; but the air behind him became solid, and he was forced to obey her. His fear increased every moment as they wound their way along a dark descending passage.

The awful stillness oppressed him, and a strange numbness made it difficult for him to proceed. At the end of the passage, Kruza whistled, and soon after a door opened into a cave whose sides were plates of polished silver. It was lighted by innumerable fire-flies.

"This hall," said Kruza, "is called Faries' Fate. Over each silver mirror is a name, and in it may be discerned its owner's destiny. Look for yourself."

Zyx glanced hastily along the wall till he discovered the name FRITH, in letters of pearls, over a convex oval mirror. It was some minutes before his eyes became sufficiently accustomed to the faint flickering light to discern the minute picture within it. At length he said to Kruza, "I see a mountain-range, whose peaks overlook a vast expanse of varied landscape, blue sea, and shifting clouds. Their feet are wrapped in a robe of feathery green; their sides are of lichen-stained granite, from whose crevices spring hardy heaths, and low evergreen shrubs; their summits are gray and white. On one of the higher peaks stands a castle"—here he drew nearer the mirror, holding his breath lest it should dim the picture. When he turned, Kruza saw a smile of content and peace on his lips.

"On the mountain is a castle," he went

on, "built of precious stones. I do not know the names of all, but its doors are of opals and its turrets of sapphires. The windows are wide open on all sides, and yet no rough wind disturbs the inmates. Within I see moving figures. One seems like Frith, grown to be a woman. She stands in the tower, and one hand—it is soft and white, with no scar of blisters or wounds—rests upon the telescope through which she has been looking. She watches a distant star, and smiles. Around her are spirits as beautiful as she, who watch with her, and seem to speak, for she often turns to listen and answer. Then her eyes grow bright, and her whole form seems luminous, as do theirs."

Zyx and Kruza then retraced their steps along the dark gallery. Zyx passed through the narrow opening first, and seeing it was now dawn, turned to take leave of the fairy, but she had vanished. So also had the granite cliff. The little brook prattled innocently over the stones, and he followed it up till he came to the path which led to his cave.



CHAPTER X.



YX continued his daily mining without intermission. Sometimes he would find in the morning that pieces of rock had sunk into the earth during the night, extending the excavation more than he could have done by days of toil. Often he came to large cavities in the rock, extending in the direction of his tunnel. Thus he progressed, by various means, and his task, though laborious, was not hopeless. Besides, the words of his guide had at length come to have so much authority with him, that he would have continued mining at his bidding, even without the prospect of reaching the Country beyond the Hills, which now encouraged him. Zyx had heard often of this country since he began his work, and longed to reach it. His

friends on this side, though aware that it was a healthful clime, and that its inhabitants enjoyed a superior civilization, knew but little else about it. No postal communication between the two countries existed; of its name, even, they were ignorant, and always called it the Country beyond the Hills. On ascertaining that his guide lived there, Zyx became more than ever anxious to reach it, and would not for worlds have given up his undertaking. The thought of ever being separated from his friend, became insupportable.

Yet he had not seen him. The mantle, which Zyx would have had removed, always covered the stranger's face. One night he lay long awake, trying to guess the hidden features, and longing for the morning to come again, that he might resume his work with the familiar grasp upon his arm.


Zyx's work was nearer its completion than he thought. He rose that morning, and began drilling as usual. But he noticed that the rock had a peculiar sound, and in the intervals of work he thought he heard the ringing of bells. The guide said nothing, but held his arm all the while. Presently the granite mass at which he worked, cracked from summit to base, and fell outward with a crash that stunned the boy, and he fell senseless into the

stranger's arms. He was gently lifted, carried out over the rubbish, and laid in the shadow of a tree, his head still resting on the shoulder of the guide, who chafed his hands, and kissed his eyelids. Then Zyx revived, and fixed his regards upon the face from which the mantle had now dropped. Its indescribable beauty overawed but did not terrify him; yet he felt still too weak to speak, and could only look wonderingly at the shining golden locks. Inwoven with them, and passing over the brow, was a golden circlet, the meaning of which the child did not understand.

"Rest, Zyx," said the guide, and drawing him to his breast, covered him entirely with his own robe, which was white and shining.

"It always seemed black in the tunnel," thought the boy, but did not speak, and was soon lost in happy dreams. While he slept, a number of the citizens of the country approached, and the guide talked with them in a low voice.

When Zyx woke, refreshed with sleep, they were still there. He cast a frightened look towards them, then hid his face in his friend's robe, who smiled and said, "They are your friends, Zyx. They dwell yonder upon the hills, and will be your companions."



"We love all who are beloved of our King," said the eldest and fairest of them.

Zyx now understood the meaning of the golden circlet. He put up his hand and touched it, then burst into tears. The king bent over him, whispered words which the citizens did not hear, and wiped away his tears. When he looked up and discovered that the strangers were gone, he took the opportunity to ask many questions about the Country beyond the Hills, all of which the king answered in a low soft voice, explaining to him, besides, many things connected with the mine, which had been mysterious. Meantime other companies of citizens came to the king, and Zyx grew familiar with their appearance. They talked much with the lad, and though they were wise and strong, and in every way far superior to him, their gentle manners dispelled his embarrassment, and he became quite at home in their presence.

As soon as Zyx had perfectly recovered his strength, the king took him by the hand and they all set out for the Hills. As they ascended, the horizon line took remoter and still remoter curves, until woodland, vale and ocean were included in the prospect, as Zyx had seen in the silver mirror. At length they reached a region beyond clouds, where the air, though cool

and fresh, blew softly in their faces. These heights were not lonely; for innumerable castles and palaces crowned them. The salubrious air had drawn hither many of the inhabitants of the country.

Zyx stood breathlessly looking at the grand placid ocean, when a touch on his shoulder from one of his new friends who stood by, drew his attention in another direction.

A child was toiling up the westward slope, her eyes fixed upon the path to watch her footing. Yes, it was Frith. She climbed swiftly, panting as she came, like one pursued. Behind her, in the shadow of a ledge, Zyx saw a hideous shape. It was the Genie, scaling the rock by means of his claws, since his feet were too huge and ponderous to follow in the path Frith took.

For one moment he seemed sure of intercepting her, but his hand touched a certain mystic carving on the rock, when suddenly his grasp relaxed, and he fell backwards over the precipice. It was the figure of the tree; the touch had stunned him.

Meantime the king had gone down to meet Frith, but the little one did not see him, till he had lifted her in his arms, and then she swooned away. The citizens, who had followed, would have taken the child;

but the king made no reply to their offers, and bore her to the summit, where she opened her eyes and saw his face for the first time.

No sooner had she done so than her full strength came to her. Standing upon the rocky steep, she fixed her eyes upon him with the eagerness with which a famished man gazes upon food; and at that instant her body became luminous, and her blue robe turned to white. At the same time her form expanded, and she grew in a moment to her full stature. Then the king took both her hands, and she saw that there were scars on his. The citizens did not hear the words he spoke, but saw him lead her to a palace whose gates were opals and whose towers were sapphires.

Zyx also had a castle near by. Both were filled with happy guests, for the country was populous, and none had any joy alone, but shared it with others.

“That is why,” said one of the guests to Zyx, as he stood looking from a window, “the houses of our country are so large. You see none but spacious mansions; some, it is true, more capacious than others, yet all having ample room for guests. Various in design, they are adapted to the tastes of the owners. All were built at the king’s expense, and have one property peculiar to

the dwellings of this land. All that transpires in them may be distinctly seen and heard from without, by the citizens of the country; but when an evil genie approaches, which sometimes happens, they become opaque and impenetrable to sound."

"Where is the king's palace?" inquired Zyx.

"He has no separate dwelling," replied the guest, "but lives among his people."

FINIS.



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